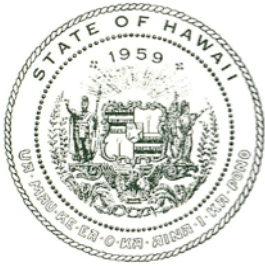


HAWAII
STATE
COMMISSION
ON THE
STATUS
OF
WOMEN



Chair
LESLIE WILKINS

COMMISSIONERS:

ELENA CABATU
CARMILLE LIM
AMY MONK
LISA ELLEN SMITH
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Executive Director
Catherine Betts, JD

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April 7, 2015

To: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Joy San Buenaventura, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: Cathy Betts
Executive Director
Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women

Re: Testimony in Support, HR 19/HCR 45

The Commission is in strong support of HR 19/HCR 45, which would request the State Department of Defense to establish and fund a women veterans services coordinator position. The Military Women's Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs of women veterans in Hawaii. In 2013, this task force submitted a report to the legislature detailing serious concerns within the women's veteran community. Specifically, the task force found that military sexual trauma, PTSD and homelessness were exacerbated for female veterans.

The 2013 report included a recommendation to create a Women's Services Coordinator position. Unfortunately, this position has not been created or funded as of yet. The women's community feels there is an urgent need for this position, as many female veterans returning home have difficulty accessing basic services, like reproductive health care, treatment for PTSD, and basic educational benefits due to them. The coordinator would be able to address the growing needs of female veterans. The Commission strongly supports the passage of this resolution. Thank you for your time.

Women Veterans Task Force Committee
Advisory Board
Office of Veterans Affairs

LATE

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair

Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

DATE: Tuesday, April 07, 2015

TIME: 2:00pm

PLACE: Conference Room 325

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HCR45/HR19/SR7/SCR26 that requests the establishment and funding for a veterans coordinator (counselor IV) position within the Office of Veterans' Services, to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans.

Aloha Chair Rhoads and committee members,

I am Ann S. Freed, Chair of The Hawaii Military Women's Task Force Committee. We are in strong support of this measure.

The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs women veterans in Hawaii. We submitted a report to the 2013 Legislature that detailed preliminary findings concerning our women warriors. We found that military sexual trauma (MST) is rampant in the armed services and that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD, are some of the major problems that our women face.

The 2013 report included a recommendation to create a Women's Services Coordinator position. Last year HB2072 was introduced to create and fund this position as a "veterans service coordinator" focusing on women. Sadly the bill died in conference, as the money committees could not agree on funding for the position.

This year HB881 failed to receive a hearing in WAM and is therefore dead for this year. This resolution will keep the idea alive so that we can address it again next year.

We feel there is some urgency to create this position, based on our research. Last year, in order to assess the scope and type of needs, we did an informal survey of women veterans throughout the state. We found that women don't know what benefits they have, that they need services for PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma, that they need re-entry services and employment services, and that they would like help getting educational benefits. Some of them had questions about eligibility. Some complained of lack of access to OB/GYN and breastfeeding among others services; many of which are provided but the women veterans were unaware.

Our results match those of two more extensive surveys by Disabled American Veterans and CalVet. All of the surveys demonstrated a need for continuous education about benefits and constant outreach.

The coordinator/counselor will provide a focus with which to address the specific needs of women veterans, bridging gaps in care. It will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. It will help the OVS to collect data, integrate services, educate women veterans on their benefits, assist women veterans in getting access to appropriate health care, assist the task force in outreach efforts and a host of other duties. But, probably most important, the counselor will help the Office of Veterans Services to assess what services are lacking or inadequate.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs. This position is the first step in doing that.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

Ann S. Freed

Chair, Women's Military Task Force Committee

Office of Veteran's Services

annsfreed@gmail.com

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	LATE
Ann Greenlee	Governors Veterans Advisory Board	Comments Only	

Comments: Strong support for this resolution. Many states have a women veterans' coordinator in their state veterans division. As women continue to make up an ever greater percentage of our veteran numbers, it is imperative that there is a position to coordinate and provide expertise on the many issues women veterans face that are distinct and separate from their male counterparts.



April 7, 2015

TO: Representative Karl Rhoads, Chair
Representative Joy San Buenaventura, Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Jeanne Y. Ohta, Co-Chair

RE: HR 19/HCR 45 REQUESTING THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO
ESTABLISH AND FUND A VETERAN WOMEN SERVICES COORDINATOR
POSITION WITHIN THE OFFICE OF VETERANS' SERVICES
Hearing: Tuesday, April 7, 2015, 2:00 p.m., Room 325

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus writes in support of HR19 and HCR 45 which requests that the State Department of Defense establish and fund a Women's Veterans Coordinator position in the Office of Veteran Services (OVS).

In 2013 the Hawai'i Military Women's Taskforce submitted a report to the legislature recommending that a Women's Veteran's Coordinator position be established in order to help address the unique needs of women in active duty and of women veterans, needs that are often different from those of their male counterparts. The coordinator will fill a gap in care and will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawai'i to move forward in their lives. The coordinator would help the OVS to collect data, integrate services and move forward on the Task Force's recommendations.

As with other organizations where women are a distinct minority; programs and services were originally established and created for male populations. Those benefits and services have been designed to address the needs of men rather than women. Women need gender appropriate programs, benefits, and services; nowhere is this more evident than for healthcare services and for military sexual trauma, a result of sexual assault while in the military.

It is important to recognize the specific and distinctive needs of women in their effort to re-enter civilian lives, retrain for new careers, establish homes for themselves and their families, and to care for their families. Establishing a Coordinator position will help focus the OVS on gender appropriate, effective care for women

The Hawai'i State Democratic Women's Caucus is a catalyst for progressive, social, economic, and political change through action on critical issues facing Hawaii's women and girls. It is because of this mission, the Women's Caucus supports this important measure.

We thank the committee for this opportunity to submit our testimony.



Carswell J. Ross, Jr. MA, CMSgt USAF Ret.
94-1020 Puana Street
Waipahu, Hawaii 96797

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

DATE: Tuesday, April 7, 2015

TIME: 2:00 PM

PLACE: Conference Room 325

Good afternoon Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura, and members of the Committee. I am Carswell Ross, advisor to the Women Veterans Task Force Committee. I **strongly support** HCR45/HR19, which request the establishment and funding for a veterans counselor IV position within the Office of Veterans' Services, to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans who served on active duty for the full period they were activated.

The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs women veterans in Hawaii. We submitted a report to the 2013 Legislature that detailed preliminary findings concerning our women warriors. We found that military sexual trauma (MST) is rampant in the armed services, that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD, are some of the major problems that our women face.

We feel there is some urgency to create this position, based on the Committee's research. Last year, in order to assess the scope and type of needs of our women veterans, we performed an informal survey of women veterans throughout the state. Our finding suggest that: (a) women veterans do not know what benefits they have; (b) women veterans did not know that there are services for PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma, access to OB/GYN and breastfeeding among others services; (c) that re-entry services and employment services were available; and (d) women who served are veterans.

The counselor position will provide a focus with which to address the specific needs of women veterans, bridging gaps in care. It will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. It will help the OVS to collect data, integrate services, educate women veterans on their benefits, assist women veterans in getting access to appropriate health care, assist the task force in outreach efforts and a host of other duties. But, probably most important, the counselor will help the Office of Veterans Services to assess what services are lacking or inadequate.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs. This position is the first step in doing that. Thank you for the opportunity to express my **support** for these Resolutions.

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testimony Position	Present at Hearing
Marci Lopes	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

**Women Veterans Task Force Committee
Advisory Board
Office of Veterans Affairs**

LATE

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair

Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

DATE: Tuesday, April 07, 2015

TIME: 2:00pm

PLACE: Conference Room 325

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HCR45/HR19/SR7/SCR26 that requests the establishment and funding for a veterans coordinator (counselor IV) position within the Office of Veterans' Services, to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans.

Aloha Chair Rhoads and committee members,

I am Rachel James, Secretary of The Hawaii Military Women's Sub Committee under the Governor's Advisory Board on Veterans Services. We are in strong support of this measure.

The Task Force was formed by the Legislature in 2012 to address the needs women veterans in Hawaii. We submitted a report to the 2013 Legislature that detailed preliminary findings concerning our women warriors. We found that military sexual trauma (MST) is rampant in the armed services and that homelessness and joblessness along with PTSD, are some of the major problems that our women face.

In 2013 after completion of the initial charge, the Task Force was recommissioned as a Sub Committee of the Governor's Advisory Board on Veterans Services. The 2013 report included a recommendation to create a Women's Services Coordinator position, for which the Sub Committee has continued to advocate. Last year HB2072 was introduced to create and fund this position as a "veterans service coordinator" focusing on women. Sadly the bill died in conference, as the money committees could not agree on funding for the position.

This year HB881 failed to receive a hearing in WAM and is therefore dead for this year. This resolution will keep the idea alive so that we can address it again next year.

We feel there is some urgency to create this position, based on our research. Last year, in order to assess the scope and type of needs, we did an informal survey of women veterans throughout the state. We found that women don't know what benefits they have, that they need services for PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma, that they need re-entry services and employment services, and that they would like help getting educational benefits. Some of them had questions about eligibility. Some complained of lack

of access to OB/GYN and breastfeeding among others services; many of which are provided but the women veterans were unaware.

Our results match those of two more extensive surveys by Disabled American Veterans and CalVet. All of the surveys demonstrated a need for continuous education about benefits and constant outreach.

The coordinator/counselor will provide a focus with which to address the specific needs of women veterans, bridging gaps in care. It will aid with the process of helping the approximately 12,000 women veterans in Hawaii to move forward in their lives. It will help the OVS to collect data, integrate services, educate women veterans on their benefits, assist women veterans in getting access to appropriate health care, assist the task force in outreach efforts and a host of other duties. But, probably most important, the counselor will help the Office of Veterans Services to assess what services are lacking or inadequate.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs. This position is the first step in doing that.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify

Rachel James
Secretary, Women Veterans Sub Committee
Governor's Advisory Board on Veterans Services
Rachel@kuleanamicrolending.org

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Rep. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Rep. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair

LATE

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HCR45/HR19, that request the establishment and funding for a veterans coordinator (counselor IV) position within the Office of Veterans' Services, to assist all veterans, with a primary focus on female veterans who served on active duty for the full period they were activated.

Hawaii's military women have served our nation often at great cost to their health, their lives and too often to their human dignity. As a state, we need to recognize their sacrifice by addressing their needs. This position is the first step to recognize their sacrifices and then to education and assist them in all successful endeavors as veterans and citizens.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,
Linda Vee Weiland
LCDR USN Retired
Past Honolulu Branch President American Association of University Women
Past President of Honolulu club of Zonta